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ABSTRACT

"Performance management" is a term that refers loosely to a way of managing large organizations and systems. It requires the identification of clear and measurable targets and the translation of those targets into targets for the members of the organization. Audits and performance indicators then become essential parts of the appraisal of the targets and the means of reaching them, and policy decision requires a systematic review of evidence for setting reasonable targets. "Paying Teachers for What They Know and Do" (A. Odden and C. Kelley, 1997) and consultation papers from the British Government have set out an agenda of performance management for British schools. The new language of educational management now permeates the language of teaching. However, the pursuit of this kind of educational reform can result in a redescription of educational practice in business terms, something that may impoverish the relationship between the teacher and the learned and limit the professional judgment and role of the teacher. (SLD)

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Richard Pring

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Accountability for School Improvement: Productivity, Professionalism and Ethics

Performance Management and the Changing Language of Education

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1. Introduction: Reforming Teachers' Pay

In their book *Paying Teachers for What They Know and Do*, Odden and Kelley argue that the traditional way of paying and rewarding teachers is simply out-dated. It reflects a view of management which has been abandoned elsewhere in private, public and voluntary services. And it is partly responsible for the comparatively low pay of teachers, especially after several years of service.

That 'traditional way' is for teachers to be placed on a single salary schedule, albeit with some compensation for extra responsibilities. Thus, teachers, from the moment they join the profession, can expect a predictable progression up the scale or schedule until they reach the 'ceiling' – irrespective of merit, hard work, or need. Indeed, further progress in terms of salary would require leaving the classroom for a more administrative responsibility. According to Odden and Kelley, this ill-serves the recruitment, retention, morale and incentives of teachers. Moreover, it reflects a rather hierarchical view of school management. By this is meant that, in such a system of 'teacher compensation', there is a clear division between those whose job description is to manage the school and those (on the single salary schedule) who are managed.

By contrast, management and compensation in other employments reflect much more what the employees can do and have achieved in terms of devolved responsibility and remuneration. Management is 'flatter', employees or teams of employees receive due recognition for their efforts and successes, and their proven professionalism is recognised in the assumption of greater responsibility for practical and strategic decisions.

Odden and Kelley argue, therefore, that teaching should be rather like that: greater recognition, through an appropriate funding mechanism and through the devolving of management responsibility, of what teachers can do and have achieved.

There is, in their view, an urgency to move in that direction because

> the tax-paying public, the business community, and policy-makers still pressure the education system to produce results and to link pay – even school finance structures, more broadly – to performance (p.11)

The pressure arises from the felt need to raise standards, to improve 'productivity' in relation to these standards, and to hold teachers accountable (both positively where they have succeeded and negatively where they have failed) for their professional work.

To enable this to happen, there needs to be much greater precision in what teachers are expected to achieve – productivity targets, if you like. But this in turn requires the setting of reasonable targets – the clear statement of what good teachers of subject X and level Y should be able to achieve. And there should be the courses and support to enable teachers achieve these targets. There must be an investment in training.

In anticipation of this shift in the management of schools and the compensation of teachers, the National Board for Professional Teaching Practice (and other professional organisations) have spelt out in much detail what these targets, within specific subjects and for specific age-ranges, should be.

The position is clearly summarised.

> Shifting pay increments from years of experience and loosely related education units to more direct measures of professional skills and competencies, adding a mechanism that undergirds the need for ongoing training and assessment of instructional strategies, and perhaps adding group-based performance bonuses are compensation changes that could reconnect how teachers are paid with the evolving strategic needs of new school organizations, calls for teacher professionalism, and the core requirements of standards-based education reform. Providing salary increments for teachers who are certified by the NBPTS as accomplished expert teachers, a policy increasingly adopted by states and districts, is a direct competency-based pay element and represents specific movement on teacher compensation reform.

Odden and Kelley's argument has been influential both within and outside the United States. Certainly it has had a profound effect upon the British Government which is now swiftly introducing 'performance related pay' to schools in England and Wales. The government Green Paper, *Teachers Meeting the Challenge* (DfEE, 1998), followed by a 'technical consultation document' on pay and performance management, and a further consultation document, *A Fast Track for Teachers* (DfEE, 1999), spell out the policy which is being implemented at speed. The proposals might be summarised as follows, starting with the words of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

> Part of this investment (in education) is for a new pay and award structure for the teaching profession ..... the present pay arrangements reflect a different era. They do not sufficiently reward good teachers for excellence in the classroom. Many teachers reach a scale point beyond which they cannot progress, however good they are, unless they take on management responsibilities. (DfEE, 1998b, p3)

As, indeed, with Odden and Kelley, this changed pay and reward structure is connected positively with a 'new vision of the profession', including professional development. The details of this 'new vision' can be summarised as follows:

(i) *Better rewards for teachers.* There will be two pay ranges for classroom teachers, with a 'performance threshold' at the end of the first range. 'Crossing the threshold' will depend on 'assessment of performance against agreed objectives'. Thereafter, annual assessments of performance, reflecting 'new professional expectations', will determine the speed with which teachers progress or do not progress up the second pay range. Furthermore, consistent with the recognition of team work in any successful organisation, there will be a School Performance Award Scheme for successful teams of teachers and whole schools, in recognition of yearly improvement and 'high results'.

(ii) *Improving leadership.* Extended pay scales will reward 'strong and effective leaders' (headteachers and their 'management teams', including 'advanced skills teachers'), though with 'fixed-term contacts' to link rewards to the achievement of agreed objectives. "Fast track teachers' will be identified early (even before or during their training) and given supplementary contracts, incentives and professional development to help them on their way to leadership.

(iii) *Better skills and staff development.* Progression up the pay scales will be supported by a contractual duty for all teachers to keep their skills and subject knowledge up to date, together with an appropriate qualifications framework, a 'Code of Practice' for providers of professional development and a new inspection programme to ensure 'value for money'.

(iv) *Initial training.* More flexible routes into teaching (employment-based, related to diagnosed needs for specific competencies, school led) will emphasise performance and practical skills, and will require nationally set standards of teaching competence and of performance in numeracy, literacy and information technology.

There is much to be commended in what Odden and Kelley argue for and in the consequent policy initiatives which many states and the British Government now pursue in the light of those arguments. Certainly there is something incongruous, in a world where performance related pay is the norm, with the preservation of a pay structure and management system which bears little relation to the merits of the professional teachers. However, there are three issues which suggest caution before too hasty a move in this direction.

2. The language of education.

How we see the world depends upon the concepts through which experience is organised, objects identified as significant, descriptions applied and evaluations made. The choice of metaphor changes our vision of what is important or how a situation is to be understood or what is to count as an appropriate assessment. The Odden and Kelley proposal, in particular its implementation by government, assumes a distinctive language through which to describe, assess and evaluate an 'educational practice' and thus the professional engagement within it. Such a language draws upon new metaphors, and through these metaphors the concept of a profession changes. Professional judgement and development take on different meanings. Teachers and 'their managers' perceive what they are doing differently. What previously was seen to be of significance to professional development is frequently demoted to the trivial and irrelevant.

The danger might be illustrated as follows. The civil servant responsible for implementing these changes in Britain, in giving an account of the nature and purposes of policy changes, said that we must 'think in business terms' – and thus draw upon the language and practices of the business world. That means that we look at those changes, as engineered by government for the improvement of standards in schools, as a 'quality circle' in which one defines the product, identifies the means for producing that product, empowers the deliverer, measures the quality, empowers the client, and develops partnership between the clients, the deliverers and the managers of the system such that there might be a continuous review of targets and means for achieving those targets. The 'product' is defined in terms of a detailed, outcomes-

related curriculum. The 'process' (or 'means' for reaching the targets) is spelt out in terms of 'effectiveness' in the production of this 'product'. The changed management structures 'empower the deliverers' of the 'process' to satisfy the needs of the respective 'stakeholders'. The 'measurement of the quality' of the 'product' is provided through a detailed assessment (a 'testing against product specification'). 'The empowering of the clients' comes about through the creation of choice, which is achieved through the availability of public data on effectiveness and through competitiveness amongst the 'deliverers of the product' so that the clients can exercise choice. And 'partnerships' are created for 'stakeholders', 'deliverers' and 'clients' to work together in developing the 'effective processes' for producing the 'product' (which is generally defined by someone external to the 'process'). The management of the whole process is conducted by what Mark Freedland (1999) refers to as 'imposed contractualism' – the cascading down from above of 'productivity targets'.

The language of education through which we are asked to 'think in business terms' – the language of inputs and outputs, of value-addedness, of performance indicators and audits, of products and productivity, of educational clients and curriculum deliverers - constitutes a new way of thinking about the relation of teacher and learner. It is a way of thinking which was non-existent until comparatively recently. It employs different metaphors, different ways of describing and evaluating educational activities. But, in so doing, it changes those activities into something else. It transforms the moral context in which education takes place and is judged successful or otherwise.

The effect of this new language is not a matter for empirical enquiry alone, for that which is to be enquired into has become a different thing. So mesmerised have we become with the importance of 'cost efficiency', 'value for money, 'productivity' and 'effectiveness' that we have failed to see that the very nature of the enterprise – of an 'educational practice' - has been redefined. Once the teacher 'delivers' someone else's curriculum with its precisely defined 'product', there is little room for that *transaction* in which the teacher, rooted in a particular cultural tradition, responds to the needs of the learner. When the learner becomes a 'client' or 'customer', there is no room for the traditional apprenticeship into the community of learners. When the 'product' is

the measurable 'targets' on which 'performance' is 'audited', then little significance is attached to the 'struggle to make sense' or the deviant and creative response.

Indeed, the metaphors taken from management do not seem to embody values other than those of efficiency and effectiveness. It is as though (within the discourse of management) there are two quite different sorts of debate: that which concerns the efficient means to the attainment of clearly defined targets, and that which concerns the targets towards which we should seek to be efficient. The result is a language of 'ends' and targets established outside the process of being educated - the endless lists of competencies, the 'can dos' which might be objectively measured, the professional skills on which teacher are to be assessed if they are to progress up the 'salary schedule'. 'Education', then, becomes the means to achieve these ends, and it is judged essentially by its effectiveness. If it is not effective, then it should adopt other 'means', based on the kind of research which relates means to ends - that is, what the teacher does to what the learner can produce as a result. 'Means' are logically 'separated' from the 'ends', and the quality of the 'input' is measured simply by reference to the success or otherwise of the 'output'.

Think, however, in terms of a different set of metaphors. Oakeshott, in his essay 'Education: its engagement and its frustrations', speaks of education as the introduction of young people to a world of ideas which are embodied in the 'conversations between the generations of mankind'. Through that introduction the young learner comes to learn and appreciate the voices of poetry, of philosophy, of history, of science. There is an engagement with ideas, a struggle to make sense, a search for value in what often appears dull and mundane, an excitement in intellectual and aesthetic discovery, an entry to a tradition of thinking and criticism. As in all good conversations (especially one where there is such an engagement with ideas and where the spirit of criticism prevails), one cannot define in advance what the end of that conversation or engagement will or should be. And, indeed, the end is but the starting point for further conversations.

Teaching, therefore, becomes a 'transaction' between the teacher and the learner in which the teacher mediates the different voices to those who are seeking to take part.

That conversation between the generations, embedded within literature, drama, oral traditions and narratives, artefacts, social practices, works of art, etc., speak to the needs and aspirations of the young people, but at different levels and in different ways. The art and skill of the teacher lie in making the connections between the *impersonal* world of what is bequeathed to us in libraries, etc. and the *personal* world of the young people, thereby creating an *interpersonal* world of informed and critical dialogue. The fruit of such efforts will be reflected in thoughts, beliefs and valuings which are diverse, unpredictable and sometimes slow to mature.

Different metaphors, therefore, provide different understandings of an 'educational practice'. Business metaphors make possible a management of that practice in terms of 'targets', 'productivity', 'effectiveness', 'professional competence', 'professional appraisal', 'client choice' within a 'market setting', which the metaphor of 'conversation' does not. Indeed, it provides the framework of management control, as 'targets' are 'cascaded' from above, and as pay is related to the achievement of those targets. But such business terms provide an impoverished vocabulary for that transaction between teacher and learner as both engage with the richness of the ideas which we have inherited and through which we struggle to make sense of the physical, social, moral and aesthetic worlds we inhabit. The engagement between teacher and learner, as they endeavour to appreciate a poem or to understand a theorem or to solve a design problem or to test out a favourite theory or to resolve a moral dilemma, is both the means and the end. For, as Dewey argued, the so called 'end' becomes the 'means' to yet further thinking - the pursuit of yet further goals. But that is probably why Dewey for so long was on the index of forbidden books in teacher training - a different language from that of management and control .

3. Performance

According to Odden and Kelley, there is a shift in the organisation of employment more generally from that in which reward relates to job (and hence the need to specify exactly the roles connected with the job) to that in which reward is related to competence and to performance. That enables employers to be more flexible in responding to unpredictably changing markets. Similarly in teaching, it is difficult to

anticipate all the different roles which a teacher will need to fill in a school which serves so many different purposes. Hence,

> .... schools also must manage competencies .... for each individual and for the school as a whole so that the teachers within the school have the combined competencies to accomplish all the school's purposes and tasks. (p.47)

'Compensation' (that is, pay in its different shapes and sizes), awarded for having the required skills and for putting on the right performance, can thus serve a variety of organisational functions: promoting recruitment and retention of teachers, encouraging the acquisition of skills, focusing on higher performances, creating an appropriate organisational culture and structure.

There is, however, one major difficulty associated with this manipulative use of 'compensation'. It lies in the establishment of a direct link between the target or measured performance of the student, on the one hand, and the performance of the teacher, or of a team of teachers, on the other. And that in turn arises from the ambiguity of the term,'performance'. 'Performance' generally refers to those behaviours which can be observed and measured. They are the targets which the target setters (those, very often, with the political power) decide upon and 'cascade down' to the schools and thence to the teachers. They require a standardisation of what is to be produced – results which are comparable across similar situations. Thus, in Britain, the government, at intervals, announces the performances required of teachers in terms of the performances required of the students (measured in examination grades at different stages of their schooling), or in percentage increases in student performances ,as ever higher standards are aimed for.

But let us return to the metaphor of the conversation. The engagement of the student with the ideas they are presented with, or their participation in that conversation between the generations, will be reflected in a range of performances without being reduced to, or identified with, any finite and preordained number of them. Performances, in this sense, are *criteria* of aims achieved, not the aims themselves. There is a confusion between the criteria by which a particular achievement is

assessed and the achievement itself. How might one specify all the performances connected with learning where that refers to learning skills, ideas, attitudes, knowledge, concepts, and where such learning takes place at different levels of understanding, and where it needs to respect the logic of the different subject matters? Previous efforts to define 'performance' for the sake of 'thinking in business terms' have succeeded only by the reduction of complex logical structures to simple behavioural outcomes – by reducing mental states to behavioural criteria.

Furthermore, the performance related pay, even with a limited notion of perormance, relies upon the establishment of a causal link between the intervention of the teacher and the particular results. The failure to achieve targets is blamed on the teacher or the school. Schools are thus 'failed' and, in Britain, put on 'special measures', as though 'results' are not themselves the consequence of many interacting factors, the effect of which cannot (logically cannot) be predicted.

4. Professional

Odden and Kelley argue, as does the British Government, that 'performance related pay', supported by a detailed analysis of the relevant skills and competencies, enhances rather than diminishes the professional nature and stature of teachers. In a sense it does. The competent classroom manager might be said to be more professional than the incompetent one. But at the same time it is a limited notion of 'professional'.

An educational practice is a transaction between a teacher and a learner within a framework of agreed purposes and underlying procedural values. Such a transaction respects the learning needs of the learner, on the one hand, and, on the other, mediates those aspects of the culture, which are valued and which meet those needs. Such aspects include a tradition of literature and literary criticism, the narratives picked out by history, the understandings of the physical world embodied within the different sciences, the appreciation of the social worlds reflected in the arts. And, of course, such traditions, narratives, understandings and appreciations are by no means static. They are the product of deliberations, arguments, criticisms within and 'between the

generations of mankind'. Many teachers – of English, say, or of science – see themselves as participating in such a tradition, indeed its custodians. They speak from a love of their subject and wish to convey that. They believe that the understanding enshrined within that tradition is important to the young people as they seek a deeper appreciation and knowledge of their lives and of the challenges within them. The teachers want, as it were, to bring the young people on the 'inside' of those traditions. Hence, it would be wrong to characterise such teaching activities by reference to some 'products' or set of 'targets' logically disconnected from the activity of teaching. The goal, aim, value or purpose is embodied within the practice. One might refer to an 'educational practice' as a particular form of life, a way of thinking, a mode of valuing, into which the learner is being invited or even seduced.

The role of the teacher in such a practice requires deliberation about the aims to be fulfilled in teaching this or that to these particular learners, as much as it does the best ways of achieving these values or aims. The teacher is constantly deliberating and making judgements about the value of what is taught as well as the effectiveness of this or that method.

Such a way of seeing an educational activity is to be contrasted with one in which an activity is geared simply to the production of something else – something only contingently or even arbitrarily connected with the activity itself. In pursuit of imposed targets (against which teachers are to be assessed) professional judgement is increasingly limited to deciding upon the most efficient means to the achieving of those targets. Hence, the perceived poverty of those assessments of teacher performance which reduce professional judgement of teachers, immersed in their respective disciplines which they seek to communicate to the students, to the lists of competencies through which limited targets are reached.

Elliott (1991) illustrates this theorising about practice from the Ford Teaching Project which he directed and which involved over 40 teachers in 12 schools. The issue they were addressing was that of methods of teaching which promoted pupil enquiry and discovery. Pupil enquiry and discovery were an alternative mode of learning from that which normally prevailed in classrooms. What starts off with an aspiration, a

rather general idea, certain educational values, needs to be translated into a set of practices. And these practices need to be examined critically in the light of those values. Do they, in fact, embody or make sense of the original aspiration? How far do they depend on classroom organisation or previous experience? Do these practices have unintended and unacknowledged effects on the rest of the curriculum?

By sharing the problems, the questions and the tentative conclusions, the teachers were able to build up a body of *professional* knowledge, tentative perhaps, but knowledge which had withstood critical questioning. This professional knowledge was developed through the collection of relevant data, the interpretation of this data, the critiquing of the interpretation in the light of the evidence, the reflection upon the values which were implicit within the practice. Thus, there is a constant interpretation, testing, re-interpretation, critical scrutiny, moral reflection – an ongoing process which feeds into and is put to the test in the teaching.

This sense of the teacher as a professional – deliberating about the value of proceeding in this way rather than that or about the most appropriate way ahead for particular students – is lost in the more limited picture of the teacher assessed according to the preordained performances required by those who set the targets.

5. Conclusion

"Performance management' is a term which refers loosely to a way of managing large organisations and systems. It involves much more than 'performance related pay'. It requires the identification of clear and measurable targets for the organisation or system, and the translation of those organisational targets into targets for the members of that organisation. 'Audits' and 'performance indicators' become essential parts of the constant appraisal both of the targets and of the means of reaching them. Policy decisions require a systematic review of evidence for setting reasonable targets, in contrast with the more intuitive judgements, based upon traditional wisdom, which usually inform policy and practice.

Performance management, in Britain certainly but also in the United States, has entered the language of governance, particularly in relation to the medical and social services. More recently it has transformed the way in which the management of education is to be seen. To some extent this was anticipated in much of the literature on 'effective schooling'. But the recent consultation paper *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change*, influenced by the work of Odden and Kelley, sets out an agenda of 'performance management' in education, even though it goes against the grain for many teachers who conceive their aims and roles within the education system very differently.

Odden and Kelley are correct in arguing that the way in which teachers and schools are rewarded and organised is crucial to the improved management of schools and to the improvement of standards within them. Therefore, the new -language of educational management permeates the language of teaching. But the pursuit of such reforms leads, unless one is careful, to a redescription of educational practice in business terms, thereby impoverishing the nature of the transaction between teacher and learner and limiting rather than enhancing the professional judgement and role of the teacher. As language embodies a particular way of conceptualising experience and of understanding the world, so does the language of 'performance management' shift the way in which we see educational practice and the activity of teaching – in particular the moral dimension of teaching. Therein lies a danger rarely considered in these reforms of the educational system and of the remuneration of teachers.

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